

## [La Rubia]

Lorin W. Brown

No. of words 2,130

JUL 2 [1932?]

La Rubia

A veteran of the battle of Val Verde Don Miguel Archuleta is around ninety-six or ninety-seven years old, he is not sure. I arrived at his approximate age by taking a guess as to his age at the time in which some historical incident took place, as for instance the above mentioned battle.

Erect, firm of step and in full mental vigor he could attribute his vigorous old age only on the fact that he had enjoyed life to the fullest at all times, taking the bad with the same degree of cheerful acceptance with he received and enjoyed the good.

After a drink of Burgundy he stated that he had acquired a taste for wine while in Rio Abajo before and after the battle of Val Verde. "Before that time I drank "aguardiente" of which there was plenty distilled in and around taos where I was born. " Seguro es, " that it must have been good whiskey because it never seemed to have harmed me. " " Even now I like my whiskey at times especially my "tragito" before breakfast." [????]

Just then a red-haired [?] lady passed along the street and Don Miguel's eyes lit up and he smiled as he gazed at her retreating figure. Even after she passed out of sight he seemed to be lost in a reminiscent revery. Offer of another drink broke in on this and after sampling it Don Miguel started with;" "You know, I never see a pretty red-head but I remember the enchanted woman of the cave near old [?]. I was a soldier and there were two very good

## Library of Congress

friends of mine stationed there who were also from Taos. We were together at all times. Young as we were then and all we gave a thought to were the good times we could have together when duty permitted and money was in our pockets." "Blessed be God how long ago that was, both of my companeros are long since dead and I trust God has already pardoned their sins and granted them eternal peace."

"Pablito Martinez was one of these "companeros" a very happy fellow who was afraid of nothing not even the devil." He was very high-spirited and very proud too. I remember how my mother used to describe him." She would say; "This Pablito is like the rooster, who always bows his head going through the gate, thinking in his pride that his comb otherwise might brush the cross beam many feet above him." "Thus he was but a great friend. "The other, Manuel Esquibel was very quiet but very loyal and the three of us were together at many bailes where we made ourselves respected when the young men of the village tried to run us away."

"Now near Fort Union there is a cave of which we had heard tales. The people living near there had told us it was enchanted, that a beautiful red-haired woman was to be seen at times at the mouth of the cave, [usually?] in the morning and evening. Those who confessed to have seen her said that she was very beautiful and would appear with her red hair hanging down over her shoulders and beg them to dis-enchant her, that whoever would do so could have her for his wife." "After making this plea she would disappear into the cave again leaving them astonished at her beauty and wondering what kind of enchantment kept her prisoner." "Three men had ventured into the cave at different times but of these only one had stayed in over night and not only over night, but forever as he never came out again. The disappearance of this poor fellow led the people to believe that La Rubia was a witch who took this form to entice her victims to some horrible death inside the cave."

"One evening Pablito came in to the "cuartel" very much excited. He had been out in the hills on some duty and swore he had seen La Rubia."

## Library of Congress

of the cave. "I saw her, Por Dios que si, he swore and he was not one to swear in vain." "Tan linda, as no otherwoman." He was going to go in that cave next day if he had to desert. And so on. He was like one who is mad, we hardly slept listening to him and trying to persuade him to wait until we could all go with him. We promised that next leave we would both go with him. Three would be better than one if there were dangers to be met. Buen Dios, we finally calmed him and he slept, but even in his sleep he tossed and muttered, no doubt dreaming of rescuing his Rubia and fighting, Dios Sabe what kind of monsters."

So we waited until our next leave which we asked should fall on the same day. Guns and food we took as well as as many pitch sticks as we could find and prepare. We even had the padre confess us and bless our venture wanting to prepare ourselves in every way. On the way to the cave Pablito was full of talk about the Rubia. He was sure we would dis-enchant her. How happy he would be with her as a bride. And certainly his two friends would be happy also, soguro we would rejoice in his happiness. Maybe she was a princess from Spain or some other king's daughter and he would become rich thru marrying her." Y queridos companeros, I will not forget you, you will share with me, riches, glory everything. Pobre Pablito, he was dream- we knew --- what could be found in a hole in the ground in these sunbaked hills except maybe it was the home of some bruja who took the form of the Rubia to lure men into the cave for her own wicked ends." But Pablito had seen her. "Con estos ojos la vi", with these eyes I saw her." over and over again we heard him say. "Beautiful she is and we are not men if we do not go to her aid." Maybe he was already a little be-witched but as good friends and companeros we would all go together and fight together as we had so many times at bailes or fiestas because of other women, perhaps not Rubia, but fight we did because the village boys resented their preference for us or maybe it was only because of our uniforms. Quien Sabe."

"Nearing the cave we pitched camp, examined our pistols and powder and prepared a meal, the last one before entering the cave, first hobbling our horses to that if any thing

## Library of Congress

happened to us they would not starve and could, in time, get back to the fort. Now the entrance to the cave is not very large and it is hidden by brush and over-hang of the bluff, in which it is located.

"Inside a short ways it was necessary to light our torches in order to see. At first it was very narrow and low but in [?] varas it opened up into a large room. We held our torches close to the floor to see if we could make out any foot-prints. Suddenly Pablito jumped with a yell saying that he had seen a foot-print of La Rubia and run on farther into the cave shouting ---- "Sal Rubia Sal [Caboza?] colorada, Come out Red, Come out Red Head, we have come to dis-enchant you. Salgan diablos o domonios, Come out devils or demons we have come to fight you and free La Rubia." So quickly did he get away from us that we did not stop to see the foot-prints but hurried after our impetuous friend. We could see the glow from his torch ahead of us and hear his shouts. We called to him to wait for us and ran after him. He must not have heard us and the next thing we knew a turn in the cave hid his light from us altho we could still hear his voice. Soon we came to where three galleries branched off. Not knowing which one Pablito had taken we stopped, puzzled as to which one to follow and the rocky floor showed no marks we could go by. We went up quite a ways in one on the chance it was the one he had taken but no sign could we find. We then returned to the point where the three galleries branched and decided to leave one of us there to stop pablito if he should come back. Also we arranged on shots as signals to recall or guide us in returning to this meeting place."